

# The Albany HERALD

By Carlton Fletcher  
Tuesday, March 8, 2011

**LEESBURG, GA** — It's been six years in the making, but city of Leesburg leaders officially opened the special sales tax-funded wastewater pollution control plant at 2555 Georgia Highway 32 Monday afternoon.

In a ceremony attended by Leesburg and Lee County officials and representatives of the contracting and engineering firms that designed and built the facility, Leesburg Mayor Jim Quinn lauded the completion of the treatment plant as the “first of five or six city projects falling into place.”

“This is the start of a new Leesburg,” Quinn said. “It’s the culmination of a lot of work, work that started back in 2004. With the (historic downtown railroad) depot, redesign of downtown, the courthouse square and streetscape projects all at various stages of readiness, the pieces are coming together for the city.

“This treatment plant was the key. We were under an EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)-mandated consent order not to allow further growth until this facility was completed. We were at 100 percent capacity with our old pond (wastewater treatment) system, but that’s in the past now. You can’t get any better than what we have now.”

Ronny Dudley, vice president of the Albany-based Stevenson & Palmer Engineering firm that served as the county’s agent during construction of the plant, praised the “foresight” of Leesburg officials in moving forward with the project.

“We looked at all kinds of options, but I think building this facility was a wise decision by city leaders,” Dudley said. “This plant is going to put out good quality water into the (Kinchafoonie) creek, and it’s only running right now at about one-third of capacity.

“The city has plenty of room to grow into this plant.”

The 1.2 million-gallon-a-day treatment plant came with a price tag of \$6 million, \$5 million of which was provided through special-purpose local-option sales tax funds. Using those funds, others collected through utilities fees, and taking advantage of the extreme drop in construction costs during the recession, Leesburg officials have almost completely paid for the facility that was originally projected to cost around \$8 million.

“We owe around \$300,000 on the plant,” Quinn said in response to a question. “I’m very excited that we’ve almost paid in full the cost of the plant.”

Kenneth Cutts, who attended the ceremony as a representative of Second District Congressman Sanford Bishop, said the opening of the plant is “a good day” for Leesburg.

Bill Mitchell was hired by the city to manage the plant.